

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORNITHOLOGY  
OF DELHI

BY

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PART I

(With 2 plates)

During the winter of 1924-25 while I was in Delhi I made a small collection of birds and accumulated a number of notes. This was done with the dual object of adding specimens new to my collection and of enabling me to prepare a list of the birds of Delhi at some future date. As, however, I cannot readily trace any literature dealing specifically with the birds of this locality, and as I was fortunate in obtaining some interesting specimens, some useful purpose may perhaps be served by placing these notes on record now, instead of waiting indefinitely. Five months is too short a time in which to obtain anything approaching a complete knowledge of the birds of the district; but two or three years' continuous observation and collecting in all types of country ought to produce interesting results. I did not obtain, nor even did I see, any specimens of certain families of birds, e.g., Buntings or Rails, not because there were none to be had, but because I could not find the time to work suitable localities. I have included the names of all species observed in order to make this paper more complete; but the following notes can only be regarded as a nucleus for a more comprehensive paper on the ornithology of the Delhi Province. If and when a suitable opportunity arises, I hope to add further notes on the birds of Delhi, and by this means place on record a fuller account of the avifauna of the Province.

My activities were confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the City itself, chiefly at Raisina, with occasional excursions to places nearby, such as Okla, Kingsway, etc. Bird-life is abundant in the Delhi Province, and quite a number of common species visit one's garden. I found the babool jungles in and around Raisina very convenient and profitable hunting-grounds, as also the Ridge, and the canal near Kingsway. Unless otherwise stated, my notes refer to the neighbourhood of Raisina. I was not on leave and most of my leisure hours were occupied in collecting birds only, so that I could pay little or no attention to birds' nesting. I have, however, included a few stray notes on nests found during my stay in Delhi in the winter of 1924-25 and on some eggs collected by me a few years ago. I have also included particulars of eggs taken by Mr. F. H. Cole, an ardent young oologist, who was in Delhi during the months of November 1924 to March 1925. Scattered throughout *Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds* are a number of notes by Major C. H. T. Bingham on the eggs collected by him in Delhi, and these notes I have culled and incorporated briefly in my paper, as I think they form a useful and valuable complement. Reference to Bingham's oological notes on Delhi birds will be found in square brackets, thus: '[Eggs taken by Bingham April-July]' I have endeavoured wherever possible to indicate the status of each species recorded below; it should be explained, however, that I have in many cases regarded certain species as resident, basing my conclusion on my own personal observation of such species throughout the winter, and on Bingham's oological notes which refer to the summer months. I think that this is justifiable, and will, in the majority of instances, be found to be correct. I arrived in Delhi on November 2, 1924, and left for Simla on April 3, 1925, and during this period of five months I collected almost daily. The total number of specimens obtained was about 230—a fair result as I had to work unassisted at collecting, skinning, and writing up my notes. In the case of certain species a small series of each was obtained.

As most of my collecting was done in and around Raisina and the outskirts of Delhi City, with occasional excursions to places near by, such as Kingsway and Okla, it does not appear necessary to describe the boundaries and extent of the Delhi Province. Similarly, I shall not enter into any detail about the flora or climate of the province as a whole. All this may be left for some future occasion when my ornithological activities in Delhi have been more extended. For the present, therefore, I shall confine myself to a few remarks on the kind of country I have actually seen and worked.

For the most part Raisina, or New Delhi as it is also called, is a gently undulating, open tract—a city and its environs in embryo, which is developing rapidly. The country round about consists of open spaces, covered either with short grass or low, scrubby bushes, with the babool (*Acacia arabica*) growing freely everywhere. On the outskirts of Raisina, scattered about in patches of greater or lesser extent, are babool jungles. Fields and cultivated tracts occupy certain portions. Deserted towns and tombs lie in every direction; some cared for under Government supervision, some dilapidated and crumbling-falling to pieces amid desolate and dreary surroundings. Where there are pools, canals, or borrow-pits, reeds and long grasses fringe the water's edge. The banks of the River Jumna are, in winter, bare stretches of sand on which the tamarix or jhow (*Tamarix dioica*) grows in great profusion. At Okla is situated a weir and sluice-gates where the waters of the Jumna are controlled and diverted by canals. Some sort of a park and garden exists here—a pleasing contrast to the bare and rather monotonous aspect of the banks which stretch out on either side beyond the grounds at Okla. The historic Ridge of Delhi, which is an extension of the Mewat branch of the Aravalli Hills, forms a conspicuous and characteristic physical feature. The vegetation on the Ridge consists, as may be expected, largely of low, thorny bushes and cactus. At Kingsway there are low-lying fields, subject to inundation during the rains. The Nuzzargarh Cut Drain also passes through Kingsway. Off the Karnal road lies the comparatively large 'Horse-shoe Jheel', so-called on account of its shape.

Leaving out of consideration the babool (*Acacia arabica*), which is excessively common, some of the chief trees are *Salvadora persica* and *Butea frondosa* (which predominate in the uncultivated tracts), *Tamarindus indica*, *Melia azadirachta* and *azadarach*, various kinds of *Ficus*, etc. The only wild palm is *Phoenix sylvestris*. *Trappa bispinosa*, *Nelumbium speciosum* and *Typha latifolia* are common water-plants; while *Opuntia dillenii*, *Agave americana* and *Aloe vera* are the commonest succulents. The following wild plants may be mentioned: *Zizyphus jujuba* and *nummularia*, *Prosopis spicigera*, *Cryptostegia grandiflora*, *Argemone mexicana* and *Adhotada vasica*. *Saccharum arundinaceum* grows in profusion on embankments, etc.; *Berberis aristata*, a dense, thorny shrub, grows along the borders of cultivated fields and in dry, rocky situations; *Capparis aphylla* and *horrida* are common in waste lands and among ruins; and *Tribulus terrestris* is a common weed.

I am only able to write of the winter in Delhi, as I have had no personal experience of the summer months or the rains. It is rather pleasant during the months of October and November, but the weather thereafter becomes cold. By the middle of February it begins to warm up again, and the latter half of March is unquestionably hot, though the nights are fairly pleasant if there is a breeze. In March high winds and dust-storms are of rather frequent occurrence.

A few photographs have kindly been taken for me by Mr. E. S. Keymer. These illustrate various types of country and serve to indicate the haunts of certain species of birds, while they also possess a topical interest.

The scientific nomenclature used is that employed in Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker's *Hand-List of the Birds of the Indian Empire*. Modifications have been made where necessary in the light of the first two volumes of the second edition on Birds in the *Fauna of British India* series and of other publications.

In conclusion, I wish to express my thanks and gratitude for the kindly assistance in many ways which has been rendered me by Mr. H. Whistler, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., and by Mr. A. E. Jones, M.B.O.U. My thanks are also due to Dr. C. B. Ticehurst, M.D., M.B.O.U., for the willing manner in which he has identified certain skins and for some useful suggestions in regard to the preparation of this short paper.





BABOOL TREES ALONG THE MUTTRA ROAD  
Haunts of *Argya malcolmi*, *Phœnicurus o. phœnicuroides*,  
*Pericrocotus p. peregrinus*, *Lanius vittatus*, etc.



BABOOL JUNGLE AT RAISINA, DELHI  
The haunts of a variety of small birds.



THE CANAL AT OKLA, DELHI

Haunts of *Ceryle e. leucomelanura*, *Ardeola grayii*, etc.  
Clump of trees in background—haunts of *Cuncuma leocorypha*.



A PORTION OF THE RIDGE AT RAISINA, DELHI

Haunts of *Argya c. caudata*, *Franklinia buchanani*, *Lanius e. lahtora*, *Uroloucha malabarica*, *Cyrtostomus a. asiaticus*, etc.



**Corvus corax laurencei** (Hume). The Punjab Raven.

Hume writes: 'Even in the Delhi Division of the Punjab they breed sparingly . . .' I did not meet with any Ravens.

**Corvus splendens splendens** (Vieill.). The Indian House-Crow.

Four winters ago I remember seeing a specimen which had some white in the wings. This bird would frequent the neighbourhood of Kingsway Camp. The bones or flesh of this bird, in the eyes of the Hindus of Delhi, appear to possess some medicinal or magical properties. When out collecting near a village one day I was asked by a Hindu villager to shoot a Crow which he said he required for a certain purpose. I was not able to ascertain the exact purpose, however. Subsequently, I saw a man hawking round many dozens of live Crows for sale. These were being carried in flat baskets covered with string meshing—one basket at either end of a bamboo slung across the shoulders. The baskets were similar to those in which poultry and wild duck are carried. I have no information as to the method of capture of the Crows.

**Corvus coronoides** subsp. Jungle-Crow.

Bingham writes: 'This Crow (*macrorhynchus*, Wag.), so common at Allahabad, is very scarce here at Delhi. In fact, I have only seen one pair.'

I can endorse Bingham's remarks about the scarcity of Jungle-Crows in Delhi: they are certainly not common. A pair were seen on December 14, 1924, haunting an old ruin known as the Hauz Khas. The birds were not seen again when I visited the place on December 28, 1924, and during the rest of my stay I saw no *coronoides* Crows though I was always on the watch for them.

**Dendrocitta rufa vagabunda** (Blyth.). The Bengal Tree-pie.

Quite common. A specimen obtained belongs to this race. Wing 165 mm. Tail 285 mm.

**Argya caudata caudata**. (Dum.). The Common Babbler.

Generally found among long grass, or on thorny bushes on the Ridge. I neglected to collect a sufficient number of this common bird until it was too late. Only two specimens were procured. A ♂ on February 28, 1925 and a juv. ♀ on December 5, 1924. These appear to be of the typical race. Wing of ad. ♂ 76 mm.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March-June.]

**Argya malcolmi** (Sykes). The Large Grey Babbler.

This is by far the commonest Babbler in Delhi. Abundant everywhere in exceedingly noisy parties. Generally nests in babool trees.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March-August.]

**Turdoides terricolor terricolor** (Hodg.). The Bengal Babbler.

Common. Appears to prefer shady gardens and groves to babool trees, which is the typical haunt of *Argya malcolmi*. This Babbler seems to be rather a wary bird at times.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. April-July.]

**Ægithina nigrolutea** (Marsh). Marshall's Iora.

I did not find this pretty little bird at all common. Two obtained on December 11, 1924, were haunting babool jungle. One of them, apparently the ♂, was observed to fly up into the air and come spinning down to the tree with his feathers fluffed out. This habit has been described in the *Fauna of British India*. Birds, vol. i, page 342, second edition. An examination of the genital organs of the birds obtained showed them to be normal, so that this curious habit is not confined to the breeding season. Another pair of Ioras were seen on the Muttra Road, about 8 miles from Delhi, on February 8, 1925, and both were obtained.

At the time I obtained these Ioras I thought they were *Ægithina tiphia*, *tiphia* but on examination I found them to be undoubted examples of *nigrolutea*. Hume states (*Stray Feathers*, vol. vii, page 454) that all the Ioras collected by Cleveland in the Gurgaon District were, without exception, *nigrolutea*. In this connection his 'Remarks on the Genus *Iora*' in *Stray Feathers*, vol. v, pp. 420-452, are worth perusal. Of thirty specimens obtained by Hume, five were from Delli (Gurgaon?). According to him *nigrolutea* is a species with a defined area. Mr. Stuart Baker (*Fauna of British India* Birds,

*Ægithina nigrolutea*.—(contd.)

vol. i, p. 344) states that this species 'takes the place of *Æ. t. tiphia* and *Æ. t. humei* to the north-west of India', overlapping the range of both in certain parts of India. Wing of four specimens 62-66 mm.

*Molpastes hæmorrhous pallidus* (Stuart Baker). The Central Indian Red-vented Bulbul.

Common. Seen along with *M. l. leucotis*. Writing from the neighbourhood of Delhi, Mr. F. R. Blewitt says: 'This Bulbul breeds from the middle of May to about the middle of August.'

[Eggs taken by Bingham. April-July.]

The notes in the new edition of the *Fauna of British India* regarding the *hæmorrhous* Bulbuls are not quite clear. Two specimens obtained belong to this pale race. My identification has kindly been confirmed by Mr. Whistler.

*Molpastes leucotis leucotis* (Gould). The White-eared Bulbul.

Also very common. This species and the last-mentioned are often seen together. Mr. Jones tells me that this species does not occur in the Amballa District.

*Sitta castaneiventris castaneiventris* (Frank.). The Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch.

Collecting as I did chiefly in babool jungle and wasteland, I did not meet with this Nuthatch whose haunts are shady groves and gardens. Cole tells me that he saw it on several occasions in the Kudsia Gardens. He obtained a ♀ on December 11, 1924, and this specimen I have seen.

*Dicurus macrocercus macrocercus* (Vieill.). The Black Drongo.

Very common everywhere, and, I think, a resident species.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May to (?) August.]

This species breeds much earlier, I think, in Delhi, for I remember seeing a nest towards the end of March (1922).

*Salpornis spilonota* (Frank.). The Spotted Grey Creeper.

There is an old record of a nest found by Mr. Cleveland at Hattin, in the Gurgaon District, on April 16.

*Acrocephalus dumetorum* (Blyth.). Blyth's Reed-Warbler.

A single specimen of what may have been this species was seen among babool trees on the Ridge on March 25, 1925. I much regret having missed the bird, which disappeared among the trees and bushes. As Dr. Ticehurst remarks, this species is more of a Tree-Warbler than a Reed-Warbler in its habits (*Ibis*, July 1922, p. 550). In Simla, when this Warbler passes through in May, it is found among bushes and trees. As I did not get the bird its exact identity is doubtful. The bird seen may have been *Hippolais rama*: in fact, Mr. Jones thinks this was probably the species. Both look much alike in the field, and I may have been mistaken.

*Orthotomus sutorius sutorius* (Forst.). The Indian Tailor-Bird.

Abundant. A very common garden bird.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. April-June.]

*Cisticola juncidis cursitans* (Frank.). The Rufous Fantail-Warbler.

Bingham writes: 'I have not yet observed this bird at Delhi.' He seems to imply that it is likely to be found there. I met with this peculiarly marked Warbler on only one occasion on February 21, 1925, when I was out after Sand-Grouse in the outskirts of Raisina. Marking down a spot where some Grouse had settled, I happened to pass through a small patch of grass about two feet long, when I disturbed a Warbler which was new to me. It flew some little height above the grass, immediately being lost to view when it dropped down among the yellowish brown grass. In trying to find this bird I flushed another which behaved in the same manner. I decided to watch the exact spot where a bird settled, and when one rose again I marked it sitting quietly at the base of some grass. This specimen I shot; but I was not able to find the second bird. The way in which the streaked plumage of this species blends with the grass among which it lives is remarkable.

**Franklinia buchanani** (Blyth.). The Rufous-fronted Warbler.

Another common species, especially among jherberry bushes on the Ridge. It is also commonly seen among babool trees. This Warbler has rather a distinctive song, which consists of a trill, followed by a triple note like *sirriget-sirriget-sirriget*. A ♂ shot on December 12, 1924, was breeding.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. October.]

**Sylvia curruca affinis** (Blyth.). The Indian Lesser Whitethroat.

Abundant. Always to be seen among babool trees, though it has also haunts low bushes. Its harsh note is always to be heard in babool jungle.

**Phylloscopus collybita tristis** (Blyth.). The Siberian Chiff-Chaff.

When out collecting along the Bela Road at the back of the Fort on March 8, 1925, a specimen (sex?) was procured. Several were seen among the jhow bushes on alluvial land. Another specimen (a ♂) was shot on a Neem tree near the District Jail on the same date. Both specimens were in fat condition preparatory to migration.

**Phylloscopus indicus** (Jerd.). The Olivaceous Willow-Warbler.

A specimen (ad. ♀) was obtained in babool jungle on March 21, 1925. This species was also observed passing through on migration. Towards the end of March : I have no details of dates.

**Phylloscopus humii humii** (Brooks.) Hume's Willow-Warbler.

The note of this Willow-Warbler was heard throughout my stay. Unfortunately no specimens were obtained, but a specimen shot for me at Okla proved to be this species.

**Phylloscopus nitidus nitidus** (Blyth.). The Green Willow-Warbler.

Three or four were seen on March 21, 1925, in babool jungle on the outskirts of Raisina, and an ad. ♂ obtained. Noticed during March and April passing through on migration.

**Prinia gracilis lepida** (Blyth.). The Streaked Wren-Warbler.

The haunts, *par excellence*, of this Warbler appear to be long grass. I did not meet with it anywhere else. On February 7, 1925, numbers were seen, flitting from one clump of grass to another, at the back of the Old Fort.

There is an interesting account of the nidification of this species in Delhi by Colonel C. H. T. Marshall in *Nests and Eggs*, vol. i, p. 288.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March.]

**Prinia socialis stewarti** (Blyth.). Stewart's Ashy Wren-Warbler.

Bingham says : 'At Delhi I have not yet found its nest. I once found in July three nests all attached together in a sort of triangle, but whether built by separate pairs of birds I cannot say. Only one nest contained eggs.' This is a very common species, affecting the same type of country as *Prinia i. inornata*. Like that species it loves to investigate clumps of long grass, bushes, etc.

**Prinia inornata inornata** (Sykes.). The Indian Wren-Warbler.

Abundant. A common garden bird. Flits from bush to bush making a curious snapping noise. In the hills *Suya crinigera crinigera* indulges in the same habit.

**Lanius excubitor lahtora** (Sykes.). The Indian Grey Shrike.

Common all over, but its chief haunts appearing to be the rocky Ridge. In *Nests and Eggs*, vol. i, pp. 307-308, there is an interesting note by Mr. F. R. Blewitt on his experiences of the nidification of this Shrike in Delhi. Resident.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March--August.]

**Lanius vittatus**. (Valenc). The Bay-backed Shrike.

Undoubtedly the commonest Shrike in Delhi. Seen among babool trees along the roads. This Shrike is a good mimic. Several specimens collected, including a nicely marked juv. ♂ obtained on December 3, 1924. Blewitt has a note on this species in *Nests and Eggs*, vol. i, pp. 312-313.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May-July.]



**Lanius schach erythronotus** (Vig.). The Rufous-backed Shrike.

Not near as common as either of the two Shrikes already mentioned. If it has any particular haunts, these appear to be thin babool jungle interspersed with long grass, and also large gardens. I have seen specimens in the grounds of Metcalfe House and the Secretariat. As we require more information about this Shrike, I may mention that I met with it on several occasions during my stay in Delhi. The first occasion on which I saw it was on November 25, 1924, on which date a single bird was seen in a clump of bamboo and flowering shrubs in the grounds of the Secretariat in Old Delhi. On December 4, 1924, I obtained a fine ♂ in an open patch of ground opposite my residence in New Delhi, and on the following day I procured a ♀ in the same place. These two birds must have been together. On December 19, 1924, another specimen was seen, and this bird was also found in the same locality. On January 16, 1925, a ♀ was shot for me. A month later, on February 17, 1925, I saw two of these Shrikes in thin babool jungle at Raisina, and I saw a specimen in the grounds of Metcalfe House on March 30, 1925, when I was collecting examples of *Pastor roseus*, but I have no record of this in my diary. Bingham found it breeding in June.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. One nest containing two eggs on June 3, in the Nicholson Gardens.]

**Lanius cristatus isabellinus** (H. and E.) The Pale Brown Shrike.

Uncommon. I met with this species as follows:—

- (a) A single bird seen on November 10, 1924, was shot at but not obtained.
- (b) Juv. ♀ obtained on November 26, 1924.
- (c) Ad ♀ obtained on February 1, 1925.
- (d) A single bird seen on February 17, 1925.
- (e) A single bird seen in open fallow land off the Bela Road near the Jumna on March 8, 1925. A friend and I had several long shots at it, but in the end it eluded us!

**Teprodornis pondicerianus** (Gmel.) Wood-Shrike.

Rather common among babool trees, its curious plaintive crescendo notes attracting attention. The north-western Indian bird has been separated by Ticehurst and called *pallidus* (*vide* B. O. C., xii., p. 56). Without a good series it would be better to treat the Delhi bird binomially.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. Date not mentioned.]

**Pericrocotus brevirostris brevirostris** (Vig.). The Indian Short-billed Minivet.

About half a dozen birds seen on January 15, 1925, in a thick clump of babool trees at Raisina. No ad. ♂♂ in the black and red plumage were observed however. I was unable to obtain any specimens as my supply of twenty-two cartridges had run out. Two days later two more ♀♀ (or immature ♂♂) were seen in the same place, but the birds managed to elude me by disappearing among the trees. On March 14, 1925, three more were observed. Two specimens were shot, one of which could not be found. It is strange that I saw no red ♂♂.

**Pericrocotus peregrinus peregrinus** (L.). The Small Minivet.

Rather common. Two ♂♂ in first plumage obtained on the road to Okla on November 22, 1924. Two ad. ♂♂ on January 1925.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. Earliest nest on March 21.]

**Pericrocotus erythropterus** (Jerd.). The White-bellied Minivet.

This elegant little Minivet is not uncommon at Delhi. It is usually seen in small parties of about half a dozen birds. Seen pecking at weeds a foot or two high. A party of four or five birds seen on November 25, 1924, and three ♂♂ obtained, one of which, however, was too badly damaged for preservation. Another ♂ obtained on January 25, 1925, and another of the same sex on February 4, 1925. A solitary ♂ seen near the Jantar Mantar on January 24, 1925. I did not get a ♀ specimen.

**Oriolus oriolus kundoo** (Sykes.). The Indian Oriole.

I saw no Orioles in Delhi during my stay there.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. April-July.]



***Sturnus vulgaris poltaratzkii* (Finsch).** Finsch's Starling.

This, I think, is the common race found in Delhi. At the commencement of winter this Starling is to be found in small parties, in twos and threes or even singly, but by the middle of February enormous flocks are to be seen settling in fields and open spaces. A decent series of Starling would probably reveal the occurrence of one or two other races besides *poltaratzkii*.

***Pastor roseus* (L.).** The Rosy Pastor.

This beautiful Starling was not seen at all till the end of my stay in Delhi. They must have arrived during the third week of March, as the first birds I saw (a couple) were on March 3, 1925, and a friend told me of some he saw two or three days before. On March 25, 1925, I saw flocks of varying size flying about, and others were seen on peepul trees on the same date. On March 26, 1925, I went out after them securing three specimens. On March 30, 1925, I obtained three more, in the grounds of Metcalfe House near the Secretariat. Up to the time I left Delhi flocks were seen daily, flying north in the mornings and evenings. This species is generally supposed to regulate its migratory flight with the flowering of the cotton tree, and it is therefore worth mentioning that I did not once see a single bird on a cotton tree, though this tree was in bloom at the time that the birds were found in Delhi. Four specimens were shot on trees bearing small green berries (I do not know the name of the tree). This tree appears to be the favourite resort of Rosy Pastors, the peepul also being frequented for its fruit, but not to such an extent. The song of this species consists of a jumble of harsh grating noises, intermingled with some really tuneful notes. In the field the presence of the birds may be known at once from the clamour they make. The long black feathers on the head and throat of a bird in full plumage stand out prominently when the bird is calling.

The colours of the soft parts are as follows :—

Fully adult birds in the pink and black plumage.

*Irides*—very dark brown, almost black.

*Bill*—fleshy, with the tips and culmen brownish, the base of the lower mandible blackish-plumbeous. Inside of mouth plumbeous posteriorly, pink anteriorly.

*Legs and feet*—brownish-yellow, tinged fleshy.

*Claws*—blackish-brown, with pale bases.

Birds in immature plumage.

*Irides*—As above.

*Bill*—pale flesh, with tips and culmen dark horny-brown, and base of lower mandible dull yellow. Inside of mouth dull yellow tinged plumbeous, with anterior portion of inside of both mandibles fleshy.

*Legs and feet*—dark-brown.

*Claws*—blackish-brown, without pale bases.

***Temenuchus pagodarum* (Gmel.)** The Black-headed Myna.

This elegant little Myna was seen in pairs or in small parties in thin babool jungle and in other suitable localities.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May-July.]

***Acridotheres tristis tristis* (L.)** The Common House-Myna.

Abundant. Resident.

***Acridotheres ginginianus* (Lath.)** The Bank Myna.

Common. Often seen attending grazing cattle. Numbers of these Mynas are to be seen at the Delhi railway station and at other stations on the line towards Ambala. They seem, in fact, to take the place of *A. t. tristis* at the railway stations.

***Sturnopastor contra contra* (L.)** The Pied Myna.

This species is found bathing in the evenings along with *Acridotheres t. tristis*. It seems by preference to haunt country in the vicinity of water, and although a common species, is not usually found elsewhere.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May-July.]

**Siphia parva parva** (Bechst.). The European Red-breasted Flycatcher.

A ♂ seen on January 11, 1925, in a large peepul tree in the grounds at Okla. Quite a number seen in babool jungle on March 22, 1925, on which date a ♂ and two ♀♀ were obtained. These were hawking insects among the trees. The note of this species is a *chit-trr* and is much like that of *Cyornis superciliosus*, but decidedly softer. ♀♀ appeared to be far in excess of ♂♂. A pair seen on March 26, 1925 and the ♀ obtained.

**Stoparola melanops melanops** (Vig.) The Verditer Flycatcher.

Miss Holmer in her book entitled *Indian Bird-Life* states that she has seen this Flycatcher in 'kikar jungle in New Delhi.' I did not meet with it.

**Culicicapa ceylonensis ceylonensis** (Swains.) The Grey-headed Flycatcher.

The note of this little Flycatcher was heard emanating from a clump of neem trees on the Okla road. No specimens obtained.

**Terpsephone paradisi paradisi** (L.) The Indian Paradise Flycatcher.

I did not see this species, and it had not arrived before I left Delhi.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. Seven nests on May 27, and June 12.]

**Rhipidura aureola aureola** (Less.) The White-browed Fantail Flycatcher.

Commonly seen singly or in pairs in babool jungle along roadsides.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. July 8.]

**Saxicola caprata bicolor**. (Sykes). The Northern Indian Pied Bush-Chat.

Common among bushes and shrubs in waste-land.

I obtained a nest at Kingsway towards the end of March 1922 containing four eggs.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May-June.]

**Saxicola torquata indica**. (Blyth.). The Indian Bush-Chat.

Not quite as common as the species last mentioned, but, of course, haunting the same kind of ground.

**Oenanthe picata** (Blyth.). The Pied Chat.

Fairly common. Not infrequently seen on the roofs of houses and on walls. Far more ♂♂ than ♀♀ seen. Dr. C. B. Ticehurst noticed this same phenomenon in Lower Sind, but is unable to offer any reason for it. (*Ibis*, 1922, p. 633). I did not obtain, or even see, any specimens of the *capistrata* form of this species, though I kept a very sharp look-out for it. This is probably a distinct species or subspecies, rather than a dimorphic form of *Oe. picata*.

**Oenanthe isabellina** (Cretzsch). The Isabelline Chat.

Several pairs of what I took to be this species were seen on fallow land near the Hauz Khas on December 28, 1924. A stiff breeze was blowing that day and I tried several shots without success. A single bird seen on February 21, 1925, in bare, open ground, interspersed with a few thorny bushes and deep dry drains. This bird was far too wary and I did not get it. Four winters ago I saw this species in fields near Kingsway, but on two occasions when I visited this locality in 1924-25 I did not meet with a single Chat of this species.

**Cercomela fusca** (Blyth.). The Brown Rock-Chat.

Very common among piles of stones, and in rocky ground; also a most domesticated species, coming right into the house, and perching in the early mornings on the tops of windows, etc. This bird is a good mimic. I have heard it imitate the plaintive notes of *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*, *Tringa ochropus* and one or two other species.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March-August.]

**Phoenicurus ochrurus phoenicuroides**. (Moore). The Western-Indian Redstart.

Very common, especially among babool trees on which it perches freely. Seen throughout my stay in Delhi.

**Cyanosylvia suecica pallidogularis** (Zarud.) The Eastern Redspotted Bluethroat.

Haunts bushes and scrub-jungle close to water, and clumps of plants in gardens. Two ♂♂ and a ♀ belong to this race.

**Saxicoloides fulicata cambaiensis** (Lath). The Brown-backed Indian Robin.

Abundant everywhere and a very common garden bird. A nest with three eggs found in a hole in a mound at the foot on a bush on March 22, 1925. Another nest built (no eggs) in a crevice in an old tomb March 29, 1925. Several pairs were seen towards the end of March carrying food to the young.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March-June.]

**Copsychus saularis saularis**. The Indian Magpie-Robin.

A common bird on the Ridge and in shady groves and gardens; but not very prominent on account of its somewhat retiring habits. A pair used to haunt the grounds at Okla.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. May-June.]

**Turdus atrogularis**. (Temm.). The Black-throated Thrush.

I remember seeing two or three specimens of this species, which I know well from my experience of Simla birds, two or three winters ago in Delhi. Unfortunately no specimens were shot then; but a fine ♂ was obtained on February 14, 1925, in the thick babool clump where I met with *Pericrocotus b. brevirostris* a month earlier. Not common.

**Monticola solitaria pando** (Sykes). The Indian Blue Rock-Thrush.

Not very common. A single bird or a pair may be seen among piles of stones and bricks. Only one ♂ obtained on November 13, 1924. A pair used to haunt the new Secretariat buildings at Raisina.

**Ploceus phillipinus phillipinus** (L.). The Baya.

Old nests seen on babool trees. A flock of about twenty birds seen on December 6, 1924, and two specimens obtained, an ad ♂ and unsexed bird. Three or four seen among long grass at the back of the Old Fort on February 7, 1925.

**Ploceus bengalensis**. (L.). The Black-throated Weaver-Bird.

The British Museum catalogue mentions a ♀, dated March 25, in the Hume collection.

**Ploceus manyar flaviceps**. (Less). The Indian Striated Weaver-Bird.

I did not get any specimens of this Weaver.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. July-September.]

**Uroloncha malabarica** (L.). The White-throated Munia.

Observed in small parties among long grass and thin babool jungle. This Munia is also very common among the thorny bushes on the Ridge, and seems to have a partiality for the kikar in which it builds its large globular nest. Cole found a nest in a kikar on November 14, 1924, with five slightly hard-set eggs. A note by Blewitt is quoted in *Nests and Eggs*. vol. 11, p. 139.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. February-September.]

**Amandava amandava amandava** (L.). The Indian Red Munia.

Seen in small parties among long grass along the canal banks at Kingsway and in other suitable localities where there is long grass. Three specimens obtained are all ♂♂.

**Erythrospiza githaginea crassirostris** (Blyth.). The Eastern Desert-Finch.

It is worth noting that this species has been obtained in the Gurgaon District near Delhi. Hume records the following note in *Stray Feathers*, vol. vii, p. 454:

'Mr. E. W. Cleveland sends me a beautiful specimen of *Bucaneetes githagineus*, which he shot near Hattin in the Gurgaon District (Punjab) on December 16, 1877.

'No doubt the bird occurred here, as Mr. Cleveland remarks, as a mere straggler, but still its occurrence so far east is most remarkable. When I discovered it years ago in Sindh, this was an enormous extension eastwards of its range (which westwards stretches to the Canaries).

'Again, last year, when I shot it at Jodhpore, we had a further eastern extension, and now this new locality extends the range to the 78° E. Long.'



**Carpodacus erythrinus roseatus.** (Hodgs). Hodgson's Rose-Finch.

A pair obtained on January 24, 1925, in thin babool jungle near the Jantar Mantar. The ♀ was first noticed perched on a low branch and was shot. I then made a search for the ♂ which I suspected must be nearby. I soon discovered him and shot him also. On January 31, 1925, I saw a party of about eight or ten birds feeding on the ground in a patch of babool trees, and secured another fine ♂. The only previous record of the occurrence of this species in Delhi appears to be ♀ dated April 2, 1872, in the Hume Collection—*vide* Mr. H. Whistler's 'Note on the Weavers and Finches of the Punjab.' (J.B.N.H.S., vol. xxx, p. 186).

**Gymnorhis flavicollis** (Frank). Yellow-throated Sparrow.

Observed first in a small party from which a bird was obtained. This was on November 13, 1924. Later on I got a solitary ♂ on February 5, 1925, and on March 7, 1925. I obtained two birds separately. On March 23, 1925, a pair was seen perched on railing on the roadside. Others were seen from time to time. This species is not at all uncommon in Delhi. The presence of this Sparrow may be detected in the field by the prolonged twittering notes of the bird which remains perched in one place for quite a long time while it keeps on twittering. The notes are like those of *Passer d. indicus* but softer and sweeter in tone. The colour of the bill in winter is variable: it may be either dark brown or black. Specimens collected appear to be intermediate between *transfuga*, and *flavicollis* and agree with examples obtained by Mr. A. E. Jones at Amballa. Please see in this connection Mr. Whistler's notes on this species (J.B.N.H.S., vol. xxx, p. 411).

[Eggs taken by Bingham, June.]

**Passer domesticus indicus.** (Jard and Selby). The Indian House-Sparrow.

Abundant. Resident.

**Emberizinae.** Buntings.

A small party of birds seen in the evening among the reeds at Okla on January 11, 1925, and apparently about to roost there, may have been Buntings of some sort. It was impossible to obtain specimens, however, and the species must remain in doubt. Although I watched for Buntings and visited all likely spots, I was unsuccessful in getting any specimens.

**Emberiza cia per.** (Hart.) The Transcaspien Meadow-Bunting.

Cole obtained a ♂ on February 24, 1925, on the Ridge at Kingsway. This was the only one seen by him.

**Riparia brevicaudata** (McClell.) The Indian Sand-Martin.

Found breeding in colonies towards the end of November and in December, January and February. A pair obtained on November 16, 1924. Several holes were opened up on December 13, 1924, but held no eggs. Cole obtained eggs as follows:—

(a) February 2, 1925. Colony of eight nests. Three nests with four eggs each.

(b) February 6, 1925. Colony of four nests. Two nests held three and four eggs each.

(c) February 26, 1925. Four nests, all with young.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. January-May and October-December.]

**Ptynoprogne concolor** (Sykel.) The Dusky Crag-Martin.

Some Crag-Martins, which, I think, must have been of this species, were seen flying about near the Old Fort on February 7, 1925.

**Hirundo rustica gutturalis.** (Scop.). The Eastern Swallow.

Seen flying over grassy plots along with *laurica* Swallows and *Riparia brevicaudata* towards the beginning of November. Later on these Swallows were not seen so prominently. An ad. ♂ and an unsexed juv. were obtained on November 10 and 11, 1924, respectively. In the field this species is easily recognized by its pinkish underparts and the dark patch on the throat. The specimens obtained seem to be intermediate between typical *rustica* and *gutturalis*.

**Hirundo daurica erythrogyia.** (Sykes.). Sykes's Striated Swallow.

I found a nest with young on March 14, 1925. in a small ruined tomb in babool jungle at Raisina. In the dome of the same tomb several pairs of *Micropus a. affinis* were also nesting. A single egg was once brought to me by a small boy.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. March-June and September.]

**Hirundo daurica nepalensis.** (Hodg.). Hodgson's Striated Swallow.

A specimen (unsexed) obtained on March 8, 1925. On which date three or four were seen perched on telegraph wires along the Bela Road. It is not easy to differentiate between this sub-species and *erythrogyia* without shooting specimens.

**Hirundo daurica striolata** (Temm. and Sch.). The Japanese Striated Swallow

On the morning of November 16, 1924, I saw numbers of Swallows of the *daurica* type perched on telegraph wires at the back of the Secretariat in Old Delhi. An ad. ♂ obtained has the striations on the lower parts very coarsely marked. It is also a large bird. It appears to be a specimen of this race, though the distribution does not normally extend so far west. Mr. A. E. Jones has compared this bird with a fair series of the commoner *daurica* Swallows in his collection, but cannot match it.

This specimen has very kindly been sent by Mr. Whistler to Dr. Ticehurst for identification.

Measurements. Wing 122 mm. Tail 120 mm. Depth of fork 68 mm.

**Hirundo smithii filifera** (Steph.). The Wire-tailed Swallow.

This species builds under culverts and bridges above water. Some winters ago I saw nests at Kingsway. I was told of some Wire-tailed Swallows seen on the telegraph wires along the Bela Road, but I visited the place two or three times without success. No specimens were collected. Some birds were seen on April 3, 1925.

[Eggs taken by Bingham. April-May.]

**Motacillidæ.** Wagtails.

Wagtails were exceedingly common when I first arrived in Delhi, and continued to be so till the middle of February. I made the mistake which seems to be difficult to avoid, viz., omitting to collect a sufficient number of specimens of a common species till one realizes it is too late to make up for lost ground. The result was that I got hardly any Wagtails. The only species I am able to record with certainty are enumerated below. From about the middle of March large numbers of Wagtails are to be seen flying over on migration in the evenings. Hundreds of birds may be watched passing over in a continuous stream. The direction appeared to be N. W. or W. N. W.

**Motacilla alba dukhunesis** (Sykes.). The Indian White Wagtail.

This was the commonest species during the winter. It remained behind till after *M. feldegg melanogrisea* had left. Stray birds were seen in grassy plots and open ground till the very end of my stay in Delhi, though no other species were observed except in flight on migration. A specimen obtained on March 21, 1925, is in very heavy moult.

**Motacilla maderaspatensis** (Gmel.). The Large Pied Wagtail.

The classification of this Wagtail in the *alba* group seems incorrect. I am inclined to agree with Dr. Ticehurst that, for the reasons given by him (J.B.N.H.S., vol. xxviii, p. 1090) this species should be kept apart from the White Wagtails. I did not see this large Wagtail anywhere else except at Okla and at Kingsway. In the latter place, I found a nest under a low bridge near Shah Alam's Tomb, on February 27, 1922. The nest held three fresh eggs which I took.

**Motacilla feldegg melanogrisea** (Hom.). The Black-headed Wagtail.

This species was common enough up to the middle of February. Birds were generally to be seen in open spaces, in fields, near patches of water and in gardens. In winter most birds are a dingy, brownish colour; in March some green begins to show on the upper parts and the lower plumage shows indications of turning yellow, and by the end of March numbers of birds in full